

'Bhoot Jolokiya' review: Overcooked mysteries and underdone chemistry

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Overcooked mysteries and underdone chemistry: The Bhoot Jolokiya recipe

Under the banner of Green Grass and DP Entertainment, the new Assamese mystery-thriller *Bhoot Jolokiya* hit the screens on September 27. Written and directed by Chinmoy Sarmah, the film revolves around two men connected by a haunting past. The narrative revolves around a guilt-ridden son who embarks on a journey with his father's former accomplice to return stolen jewellery to its rightful owner, gradually revealing his father's hidden past.

Filmed against the picturesque backdrop of Tippi in Arunachal Pradesh, as well as Jamuguri and Tezpur in Assam, *Bhoot Jolokiya* excels visually, thanks to the stunning cinematography by Papu Deka. The sound design by Debajit Gayan is also noteworthy, enhancing the film's atmosphere and heightening the tension. However, while *Bhoot Jolokiya* has its strengths, it falters in crucial aspects like screenplay and character development.

A flawed screenplay

The screenplay, unfortunately, is the weakest aspect of the film. The opening of the narrative is intriguing. Especially before the intermission, the film presents multiple plots that suggest a complex intertwining, creating anticipation for a captivating finale. However, the film fails to do so. Instead of a cohesive progression, the narrative keeps

introducing new characters, which feels like an unnecessary extension of the story rather than a natural development. By the climax, there are simply too many characters on screen, felt like a chaotic “WWE Royal Rumble” match rather than a tightly woven mystery thriller.

At many critical junctures, the pacing feels rushed, making it difficult to fully immerse in the storyline. This hurried progression also diminishes the potential chemistry between the two central characters, Jeebon (Mintu Bora) and Mainu (Atanu Barman). The duo had moments where they could create a sense of mysticism and thrill, but the screenplay limited their scope to let their chemistry fully develop. Particularly, in the post intermission, the movie seemed to rush through its scenes, preventing the audience from fully connecting emotionally. At times, it felt like I was watching a cinematic rendition of Shankar Mahadevan’s *Breathless*, but a bad version of it. On top of that, the film struggled with overly dramatic elements and dialogues that leaned heavily on “puritan Assamese”, instead of adopting a more natural conversational tone.

Character redundancy and forced elements

Another major issue in *Bhoot Jolokiya* is the inclusion of certain characters and subplots that seem unnecessary. The introduction of Antara (Adrita Parasar) and her mother, for instance, feels like they were inserted merely to add a clue, deliver a song, and introduce a romantic subplot. This leads to the question: why do so many Assamese films feel compelled to include a romantic angle, even when it isn’t required? The subplot adds little to the overall story and feels like a forced attempt to check off a box rather than an organic part of the narrative.

The inspector’s role, too, seems extraneous. Even if it was meant to incentivize Haseena (Tribeni Gogoi) and Bhodai (Chinmoy Sarmah) to team up, it feels redundant since the characters were already on track with their plan. The inspector’s presence did little to propel the plot forward and could have been entirely omitted.

Soundtrack and its missteps

The soundtrack is undoubtedly one of the film’s highlights, with *Cosmic Khyon* and *Rajkunwor* standing out in particular. Both songs are well-composed, and I found myself genuinely grooving to them. *Rajkunwor*, especially, added tension early on and played a key role in driving the narrative forward, setting the right tone for the film. However, the placement of *Cosmic Khyon* at the very end felt misplaced. As Mainu looks back at the camera, it’s clear the director intended to leave the audience with a thought-provoking question, but the immediate start of the song comes off as a gimmick, undermining the intended depth of the moment. On the other hand, *Pakhi Loga* and *Xoponere Dusokure* felt disconnected from the storyline and contributed little to nothing to the film’s overall flow or thematic elements.



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Overexerting in the pursuit of intrigue

Another striking downfall of the film is its attempt to create an overwhelming sense of mystery and the supernatural. Rather than letting the secrets unfold naturally, the film appears to be trying too hard to withhold information from the audience. This forced attempt to create suspense feels unnatural and detracts from the overall experience. The result is a film that seems overburdened with its own desire to be mysterious, losing the organic flow of storytelling in the process.

Conclusion: A missed opportunity

At the end of the day, *Bhoot Jolokiya* feels like a film that had great potential but failed to live up to it. It starts strong, with an intriguing premise and well-thought-out visual and audio design, but as the story progresses, it unravels into a rushed mess. *Bhoot Jolokiya* is like a late-night boys' hostel food recipe—it begins with grand culinary ambition, as the cook dreams up a feast with multiple ingredients and flavours. But as the clock ticks and hunger grows unbearable, the chef abandons the original plan, scrambles to throw something together, and ends up serving instant Maggi. What starts with the potential for a gourmet meal ends with a rushed dish that fills the stomach but leaves you wondering what could have been. The film, much like that midnight snack, fills the stomach but ultimately feels like a shortcut taken when there was potential for much more.

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